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UNCLAS MONROVIA 000227

SIPDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (RENUMBERED PARAGRAPHS)

DEPT FOR CA/FPP FOR MELISSA A LEDESMA-LEESE
DEPT FOR CA/FPP PLEASE PASS TO DHS
DEPT FOR AF/W FOR NOLE GAREY
DEPT FOR CA/VO/KCC
ECOWAS POSTS FOR FRAUD PREVENTION MANAGERS
FRANKFURT FOR RCO RONALD S PACKOWITZ

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KFRD](#) [CVIS](#) [CPAS](#) [CMGT](#) [ASEC](#) [LI](#)

SUBJECT: FRAUD SUMMARY - LIBERIA, SEPTEMBER - FEBRUARY 2009

REF: 08 STATE 074840
REF: 08 MONROVIA 346
REF: 08 MONROVIA 762

(U) Post's fraud summary fQ September - February 2009 follows
according to REFTEL:

11. (U) COUNTRY CONDITIONS:

Liberia continues its gradual recovery from fourteen years of civil war. Limited parts of the capital city, Monrovia, have electricity and the city still lacks a functioning water/sewer system and telephone network; health care is substandard. Government institutions are in need of capacity building - corruption and document fraud are rampant. The literacy rate is less than 20%.

It is, therefore, not surprising visa fraud is an everyday occurrence at Embassy Monrovia. Immigration from Liberia to the United States remains the desire of many Liberians given our unique relationship and shared history. There are an estimated 500,000 Liberians who have settled in the U.S. The drive to join those family members makes visa adjudication a high stakes game.

12. (SBU) NIV FRAUD:

NIV fraud continues: most applicants are standard unqualified travelers refused 214(b); however four applicants were refused 212(a)(6)(c) from September to February, including two G4 visa applicants.

Applicants continue to submit all manner of fraudulent letters of invitation, bank statements, and employment documentation. The Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) ADIS (Arrival and Departure Information System) tool has been indispensable in investigating overstays and SEVIS violations. In one case this reporting period, a previous J1 visa recipient, whose alleged wife and child accompanied him as J2 and J3s in July 2008, applied in early February for a B1/B2 visa. At the time of his B1/B2 application, a search of ADIS showed that the applicant's wife and child had not yet departed the United States. When questioned about this, the applicant averred his wife and child had returned to Liberia. The application was suspended 221(g) pending additional evidence of their return - an appearance at the consular section was suggested. As of late March, the applicant has not returned, suggesting, as ADIS indicated, this alleged wife and child remain in the United States in overstay or some other, potentially illegal, status.

The facial recognition and IDENT tools continue to enable officers to identify applicants applying with different names, nationalities,

and dates of birth from the time/s of their last application/s. Inconsistent spellings and rendering of birth dates on official Liberian documents is widespread and troubling. Even among GOL applicants, officials have applied for visas using different dates of birth, and in some cases, different names. These applications do not always appear in the standard NIV application name check, so officers frequently utilize the "CA Applicant Lookup" tool in the Consular Consolidated Database (CCD) to get a thorough picture of an individual's application history.

13. (U) IV FRAUD:

During this reporting period, 71 family based petitions were returned to the National Visa Center with a recommendation for revocation - of these petitions, 21 were based on DNA test results.

DNA testing has been especially effective in combating fraud in IR2 cases. For example, this reporting period in cases when American citizen (or LPR) parents have petitioned for multiple children, at least one of the alleged children (in a group of two to five cross referenced cases) has not/not been a biological relative of the petitioner. In cases where the petitioner is the father of the IR2, there is decent chance the petitioner legitimately did not know before DNA testing whether or not the child was his biologically. However, there have been several cases where petitioner mothers have tried to "slip through" extra children as beneficiaries. It is highly unlikely that the birth mother of a child would not know if a child was hers biologically. Yet, DNA results excluded many "biological mothers" as the blood relatives of beneficiaries during the reporting period, indicating these petitioners were attempting alien or relative smuggling.

Another interesting trend of note is, again, in groups of cross referenced beneficiaries of American citizen or LPR fathers, when DNA testing has been conducted between the petitioner and multiple beneficiaries, the child in the group whose DNA results do not confirm the alleged relationship usually bears the father/petitioner's name with the designation of junior (Jr.). In at least three cases this reporting period, the petitioner's "junior" child (again, the child with the same name as the petitioner father) was the only child amongst a group of beneficiaries who did not have a biological relationship with the petitioner. This indicates, like fraud with biological mother petitioners, there are consistent attempts by petitioners to smuggle non-biological children through the immigrant visa system by any means necessary.

A dearth of secondary evidence continues to make adjudication of marriage and fianc(e) cases difficult. Conveniently, proof of bona fide relationships is "missing" due to the "war," a "fire," or a "robber." While this is likely the situation in some cases, it is certainly not true across the board, as applicants would have officers believe. Accurint, the Consular Consolidated Database (CCD), DNA testing, and neighborhood investigations are relied upon heavily in order to authenticate claimed relationships.

14. (U) DV FRAUD:

Between IV and DV (Diversity Visa) from September to February, 54 cases were refused 212(a)(6)(c)(1), 8 cases were refused 212(a)(6)(c)(2), and 2 cases were refused 212(a)(6)(e). The bulk of 6(c) refusals were DV cases in September 2008, the closing month of the DV program for 2008. In fact, in September alone, 37 DV applicants were refused 6(c)(1), one was refused 6(c)(2), and two were refused 6(e). Predictably, in the last month of DV, applicants made last ditch efforts to meet the educational qualifications of the program by submitting fraudulent documents. The number of DV imposters also increased during the last month of the program.

Since September, one DV applicant who could not read or write openly admitted to having obtained a fraudulent diploma and West African Examination Council (WAEC) certificate from Assemblies of God High School through her uncle. Another set of WAEC results from this high school was also recently confirmed by the WAEC office as fraudulent. Said high school has replaced Muslim Congress High School (see REFTEL) as the school of choice from which to receive fraudulent documents specifically for DV. Undoubtedly, when applicants receive word Post is savvy to Assemblies of God High

School malfeasance, this fraud pattern will replicate itself with another secondary institution. Diplomas from the Monrovia Consolidated School System also appear to have been given to applicants who have not completed high school. In one case, the applicant crumpled her diploma to give the appearance it was old - issued in the 1990s - even though it otherwise appeared new. In fact, the computer technology used to create this diploma would not have been available in the middle of the civil war when it was alleged to have been rendered.

Post continues to see pop-up and clip-on spouses and children, the most insidious of which have been refused for alien smuggling. The consular investigator, through neighborhood investigations, has also discovered an increasing number of "single" applicants (applicants who have entered the DV lottery alone) living with wives and children, grounds for a 5(A) refusals.

Another recent trend is for applicants to submit recent name change documents in order for their educational documents, which are in a different name, to look like theirs. What seems to be happening is: applicants are purchasing a set of legitimate documents in one name, and then getting paperwork to indicate they have changed their name from that name to the name with which they entered the DV lottery. However, many of these names bear no correspondence to one another - there have been cases where applicants have supposedly changed their first, middle, and last names in the time between completing high school and entering the DV lottery. A text search in CCD of one applicant's alleged name during high school, which was different than his current "changed" name, showed that the applicant was actually attempting to submit his brother's high school documents as his own. While documents might be confirmed as genuine by the authorities, the DV applicants with the alleged name changes are not the documents' true owners.

15. (U) ACS AND PASSPORT FRAUD:

There is no doubt thousands of Liberians in the United States wrestle with very complicated immigration issues and statuses. As the diaspora returns home, these issues emerge both on the visa line and at the ACS window. Officers have recently discovered during the course of visa interviews that Liberians previously residing in the United States were able to work by falsely claiming to be United States citizens. One immigrant visa applicant swore an oath on his I-9 that he was an American citizen in order to work for the state of New Jersey. Another applied for a NIV after alleging during American citizen hours that he was alternately a citizen and an LPR.

If Delayed Enforced Departure (DED) eventually comes to a close for Liberians, findings of false claims to U.S. citizenship will rise in the adjudication of passport and visa applications.

During this period, two teenagers claiming to be American citizens without any documentation of their citizenship were interviewed. The teenagers went so far as to state American high school and supposed relatives' names in the United States. However, PIRS, Accurant, and other searches produced no results; neither are American citizens. When one was asked to provide additional proof of his status in the United States, he never returned. This individual also stated that he "heard there was a form you could fill out to get a plane ticket back to the United States." Officers hear this widespread myth about repatriation loans frequently. The bar for receiving a repatriation loan is high, however, and to date Post does not believe the system is being abused.

16. (SBU) ADOPTION FRAUD:

Post was informed on January 14, 2008, that the GOL suspended adoption processing by the adoption service providers (ASPs) Acres of Hope (AOH) and the West African Children Support Network (WACSN) following allegations of sexual assault and failure to adhere to exit procedures. Subsequently, the President of Liberia announced on January 26 that processing of all/all inter-country adoptions was suspended. The President announced the suspension will last until the GOL ratifies the new Child Protection Act, which calls for the institution of new adoption regulations. The GOL has not given a timeframe for lifting the suspension, but on March 25, Post heard the new Child Protection Act, which contains provisions for adoption, is on the President's desk.

Meanwhile, adoption disruptions continue in the United States by parents who have adopted Liberian children. Some of these disruptions have at their root fraud committed by ASPs. In one disruption, which resulted in a child's abandonment then repatriation to child protective services in the United States, AOH, the ASP who had the child adopted, alleged a child was 10 years old and had documents (birth certificates, adoption decrees, passports) created that stated the same. In reality, according to the adopting family, the child is probably at least 12 or 13 years old. The adopting family was not expecting to adopt a preteen and thus, experienced several incidents with the child, which eventually resulted in his abandonment back in Liberia. In another case, which also resulted in the repatriation of a previously adopted Liberian child (also through AOH), the ASP purported the age of a child to be 11, when in reality she is probably 16 or 17. These disruptions are indicative of a larger trend of age fraud by ASPs and have led to a more thorough examination by interviewing consular officers, as well as by Post's panel physician, of adopted children's purported versus actual ages. In several cases before the adoption suspension, the consular chief warned adopting parents that their adoptive children were probably well above the ages purported on their documents. In one case, the ASP was asked to change a child's breeder documents to more accurately reflect the child's true age - the ASP refused.

Additionally, before adoptions were suspended, Post continued to see cases where DNA testing excluded the relinquishing parent as the biological parent of the child as well as several cases where there were neither death certificates nor records for allegedly deceased parents.

17. (U) USE OF DNA TESTING:

DNA testing continues to be used in all categories of IV and some CRBA adjudication. All testing is performed by a panel physician and monitored by Post's EFM consular associate. A considerable number of cases eventually go to TERM 1 after DNA testing is suggested, indicating petitioners have filed a petition on behalf of a parent or child who is not their biological relative. While Post receives a number of DNA results where the petitioner is excluded (see IV Fraud), many do not bother to go through the expensive, and sometimes time consuming, process since they already know the likely outcome.

18. (U) ASYLUM AND OTHER DHS BENEFITS FRAUD:

Lost and stolen green cards remain an area of particular concern. During the reporting period, Post developed a good working

relationship with the risk management advisor (RMA) hired by Liberia's Robertsfield International Airport (RIA) whose role it is to restrict mala fide travel from Liberia. The RMA reported several airport turnarounds for passengers bound to the United States including: an individual with an expired travel permission stamp in her passport, an individual who claimed to have left her green card in the United States, an individual with a fake green card, and three imposters, individuals holding green cards that clearly did not belong to them. Interestingly, the woman who claimed to have left her green card in the U.S. did not come to the Embassy to receive a travel letter though she was referred to Post by the RMA, suggesting she is not, in fact, an LPR. In another case, a visa recipient was denied boarding because her birthday was inconsistent between her visa and passport. Instead of returning to the Embassy to have the visa reissued, she altered the birthday in her passport herself. She was denied boarding a second time and asked to have her passport official endorsed with the correct birthday by the Liberian passport agency. This also highlights the vulnerability of Liberian passports (for more about host country documents, see section 11).

19. (SBU) ALIEN SMUGGLING, TRAFFICKING, ORGANIZED CRIME, AND TERRORIST TRAVEL:

Post has nothing to report on organized crime and terrorist travel for the reporting period.

110. (SBU) DHS CRIMINAL FRAUD INVESTIGATIONS:

There are no pending DHS criminal fraud investigations at this time.

¶11. (SBU) HOST COUNTRY PASSPORT, IDENTITY DOCUMENTS, AND CIVIL REGISTRY:

As outlined in Post's last semi-annual summary, Liberian passports, birth and marriage certificates, and divorce and adoption decrees are easily obtainable and can be completed with any information requested. These generally low-quality and universally insecure genuine documents remain problematic in visa adjudication. It has become apparent a number of forged documents are being created in the United States: the access to technology in the U.S. makes it even easier to produce fraudulent documents than in Liberia, where access to technology remains very limited. Moreover, it has become increasingly clear that individuals with access to genuine letterhead, official seals, and government computers have been complicit in backdating, altering, or creating documents outside of their official duties for financial and personal gain.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) is responsible for issuing traditional marriage certificates and traditional divorce decrees. Traditional marriages are typically performed outside the court or church and are usually executed by both parties' families with a dowry, or bride price, paid to the bride's family. Traditional certificates and decrees have no/no security features (letterhead, revenue stamps, and content are inconsistent even between legitimate certificates) and thus are, by far, the most vulnerable of all Liberian documents to fraud.

The MIA has not issued any new traditional marriage decrees since October 2008, when Clarke S. Kaifa, the Superintendent for Native and Tribal Affairs in the MIA (and signatory on all certificates and decrees), was dismissed for corruption. Given the Superintendent's malfeasance, the MIA has been charged with the task of making traditional certificates less vulnerable to fraud. The MIA has no timeline for the introduction of new, security-enhanced certificates and decrees, but, once created, has agreed to provide the Embassy with the template. According to Gloria Doe in the Native and Tribal Affairs department, former Superintendent Kaifa was signing backdated traditional marriage certificates as well as new certificates without secondary evidence of relationship. Superintendent Kaifa's tenure at MIA was 2002 to 2009, rendering all documents issued during this timeframe suspect. Additionally, Gloria Doe affirmed the MIA knows of several fraudulent certificates allegedly signed by former Superintendent Willie Williamson posthumously. Superintendent Williamson served at the MIA prior to Superintendent Kaifa; he died in 2000. Gloria Doe also explained many of the certificates Kaifa signed were not entered into the Ministry's ledgers, so there is no official record of these records.

The records the MIA does have of traditional marriages, she admitted, are not arranged by date. In fact, she stated, there is no system for entering traditional marriages into the ledgers; the ledgers are done by hand in composition notebooks. The MIA does not own any computers, therefore there are no computerized records at the MIA: the certificates are created with one antiquated

typewriter present in the Native and Tribal affairs department.

¶12. (SBU) COOPERATION WITH HOST GOVERNMENT:

Cooperation with the GOL remains good. However, as before, while GOL officials are friendly and welcoming during site visits, post's consular investigator and officers have been generally unable to view official records in conjunction with fraud investigations.

¶13. (U) STAFFING AND TRAINING:

One of post's consular assistants is planning to attend ACS training at FSI in April. In December, Post's lead LES received Special Immigrant Visa status for her 17 years of service to the United States government. While she has not yet applied for her immigrant visa, she is tentatively planning to depart this summer.

Also, during the summer transfer season, one vice consul and the consular chief will depart - their replacements will arrive in June and August respectively.

THOMAS-GREENFIELD